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Graham of Fintry

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GRAHAM

OF

FINTRY

Friend and Correspondent
of Robert Burns

BY

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Robt Graham

Signature of Graham of Fintry, traced from
Sederunt Book of Ferguson Mortification, Dun-
dee.

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William Harvey

4 Gowrie Street,
Dundee.

GRAHAM OF FINTRY,

Friend and Correspondent of Burns.

So little is known concerning Robert Graham of Fintry, the friend and correspondent of Burns, that the following facts which deal with his private life may not be uninteresting to the student of Burnsiana. They are gleaned from the Sederunt Book of the Ferguson Mortification, one of the bequests now administered by the Dundee Educational Trust, of which Sir James Urquhart, LL.D., is Clerk. To that gentleman I am indebted for a perusal of the volume.

The Ferguson Mortification originated in a bequest of six thousand merks Scots made by the Rev. David Ferguson, minister of Strathmartine. In preparing the deed the douce divine selected a group of worthy men in the neighbourhood, and nominated them and their successors as administrators of the fund. The gentlemen selected included David Graham of Fintry. David acted for some time as one of the Patrons, and was succeeded by his son Robert, who was in turn succeeded by the friend of Burns.

The first mention of the patron and correspondent of the National Bard occurs in a minute of the Mortification, dated 1st November 1757. On that date the factor reported that "the tutors of Robert Graham, now of Fintry" proposed to pay off the deceased Robert Graham's bond of £269 due to the Mortification.

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Burns's correspondent was born in 1749, and was therefore a child of eight years of age at this time. A considerable period was to elapse ere he could succeed his father as one of the patrons of the Mortification, and it is interesting to recall that it was during this period that the most famous bursar the Mortification has had on its funds was assisted at the Grammar School of Dundee and the University of St Andrews. He was Robert Fergusson, the Scottish poet—Burns's elder brother in misfortune and the muse—and it is worthy of note that if Graham had been a few years older he would have enjoyed the distinction of being the patron of both of these distinguished sons of song.

The first meeting of the Mortification at which Graham was present in his capacity as patron was that held on 2d April 1773, at which time he was about 24 years of age. Between that date and 19th September 1806, which is the last occasion on which his name appears in the sederunt, twenty-two meetings were held, and he was absent from only six. At four of these six meetings matters referring to himself were discussed, which may account for his absence. The regularity of his attendance shows that he was faithful to his trust. At his first meeting he intimated to his fellow-patrons that he and ex-Provost Maxwell, of Dundee, had given a Missive Letter to Spence Oliphant Ferguson, one of the

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bursars, to enable him to prosecute his studies at St Andrews. The action was endorsed.

In these days of strict supervision of Trust money it would be regarded as unwise for a Trustee to borrow from the fund committed to his care. We have already seen that Graham's father was in debt to the Mortification to the extent of £269; and, although there is not any record of the transaction in the Sederunt Book, it appears from a later minute that a sum of £400, which had been on loan to Patrick Carnegy, of Lowers, had been transferred to Graham in 1773. At a meeting of the Patrons held four years later Graham explained to his fellow-Trustees that he had discussed the question of the loan with the late factor to the Mortification, and had said to the factor that he would pay off the loan at the ensuing Martinmas should the patrons not see their way to allow it to remain with him at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Graham further explained that the late factor had stated to him that the patrons were unlikely to disturb the loan. The patrons agreed that it should continue.

All through these minutes there is this question of accommodating Graham with cash. His financial affairs went from bad to worse, and in 1785 the factor reported to the patrons that Graham "had granted a Trust Disposition to his whole estate in favour of Alexander

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Farquharson, accountant in Edinburgh, and, failing him by death, others therein named, for the purpose of selling said lands and paying Fintry's debts." As creditors the patrons were interested in the procedure, and they authorised their factor, David Jobson, to sign the Deed of Accession which had been transmitted to him for that purpose.

Graham was soon a landless laird. The popular story is that the estate of Fintry passed into the possession of David Erskine, with the proviso that the new proprietor should restore the original name of "Linlathen," and thus allow Graham to enjoy his territorial designation "of Fintry."

The whole matter of Graham's financial affairs is obscure, but, whatever his condition was, his credit appears to have been good in the eyes of his fellow-patrons. At the meeting held on 9th March 1787—Graham was not present—it was intimated that he desired the patrons to deliver up his bond in exchange for his bill, as he intended to pay off the principal sum and interest at the ensuing Martinmas. The patrons authorised the factor to deliver the bond to Graham and take his acceptance for the money. But Martinmas came and went, and the principal sum was not repaid. Still the patrons were satisfied, for three years later—on 15th June 1790, Graham again being absent—the factor reported that a loan of £150 was falling

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in, and that Graham was willing to borrow it at 5 per cent. The patrons agreed. Five months later—on 5th November, Graham again absent—the factor reported that Graham would only pay 4½ per cent., and that he was willing to grant a bond for the whole sum of £550 at that rate of interest. The patrons again agreed, and instructed the factor to take his bond and deliver up his bill. The loan continued till 17th December 1796, when it was transferred to David Scott of Dunninauld. I may finish the transaction by adding that the money was repaid to the patrons by Scott's successor in 1812.

Graham died on 10th January 1815, but for the last nine years of his life he took no active part in the business of the Mortification. The last meeting he attended was one held on 19th September 1806.

There is a tradition that when Burns visited Dundee he was the guest of a citizen of the name of David Jobson. The name was a common one in the business life of the city of those days, and there is some doubt as to the identity of Burns's host. At the date of the poet's visit a David Jobson, as we have seen, was factor to the Ferguson Mortification. If he was the man he and Graham of Fintry would find Burns and his work a subject of mutual interest when they met from time to time to help "lads o' pairs" to College.

STATE OF NEW YORK

IN SENATE,
January 10, 1890.

REPORT
OF THE
COMMISSIONER OF THE LAND OFFICE,
IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION
PASSED BY THE SENATE,
MAY 18, 1889.

ALBANY:
J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.,
PRINTERS,
1890.

The following is a list of the lands owned by the State of New York, as of January 1, 1890, and the amount of the taxes thereon, as assessed for the year 1889. The lands are classified according to the nature of the soil, and the amount of the taxes is given in dollars and cents. The total amount of the taxes on the lands owned by the State is \$1,000,000.00.

The following is a list of the lands owned by the State of New York, as of January 1, 1890, and the amount of the taxes thereon, as assessed for the year 1889. The lands are classified according to the nature of the soil, and the amount of the taxes is given in dollars and cents. The total amount of the taxes on the lands owned by the State is \$1,000,000.00.

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